

HOUSE BILL 3525
By Maddox

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
relative to institutions granting high school
diplomas.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-1-302, is amended by adding the following language as new subsection (m):

(m) To protect high school students of this state from substandard education and deceptive or fraudulent practices in the granting of high school diplomas, the board shall promulgate rules and regulations for the registration of persons, firms, schools, or educational institutions offering to citizens of this state high school diplomas through completion of correspondence courses. All such rules and regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with the provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 5.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 1, Part 2, is amended by adding the following language as new, appropriately designated section:

§ 49-1-2__.

(a) The department of education shall grant a certificate of registration to any person, firm, school, or educational institution offering to citizens of this state high school diplomas through completion of correspondence courses that meets the requirements of the rules and regulations of the state board of education promulgated under § 49-1-302(m).

(b) For the purposes of this section and § 49-1-302(m), unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Correspondence course" means a course offered for high school credit in which the student receives lessons and tests by mail, via the Internet, or by any other method in which the student completes the majority of the course by self-study without instruction in person by a teacher and for which the student pays to receive credit for the course;

(2) "High school diploma" means a credential indicating the successful completion of high school; and

(3) "Regional accrediting association" means:

(A) The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools;

(B) The New England Association of Schools and Colleges;

(C) The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools;

(D) The Northwestern Association of Schools and Colleges;

(E) The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; or

(F) The Western Association of Schools and Colleges;

(c) The provisions of this section shall apply to all persons, firms, schools or educational institutions offering high school correspondence courses, except:

(1) Public secondary or postsecondary institutions;

(2) Private secondary schools that are approved individually by the department of education;

(3) Private secondary schools that belong to any agency whose accreditation process is approved by the state board of education;

(4) Private secondary or postsecondary schools that are members of a regional accrediting association; or

(5) Private secondary schools that are church-related schools and exempt from regulation under § 49-50-801.

(d) Any person, firm, school or educational institution, who, by solicitation in any form made in this state, enrolls or seeks to enroll a resident of this state in a correspondence course offered by an institution granting high school diplomas based on completion of correspondence courses without first registering with the department of education commits a Class B misdemeanor, punishable only by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500).

SECTION 3. For the purposes of the state board of education promulgating rules and regulations, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it. For all other purposes, this act shall take effect January 1, 2007, the public welfare requiring it.